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RON PEMSTEIN/BUCHAREST

ROMANIA'S BALANCING ACT

ANNCR:

THE VISIT OF HUA KUO FENG XO ROMANIA HAS SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE NOT ONLY TO CHINA. IT ALSO HIGHLIGHTS ROMANIA'S DELICATE RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. FROM BUCHAREST, RON PEMSTEIN FILED THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE ROMANIAN POSITION.

VOICE:

"A TIGHTROPE WALKER," SAYS ONE PROFESSOR; "A MASTER OF THE BALANCING ACT," SAYS A DIPLOMAT; A CARTOON IN THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG SHOWS HIM OVERWHELMED BY CARRYING SO MANY FLAGS. -- THEY'RE ALL DESCRIBING THE FOREIGN POLICY OF NICOLAE CEAUSESCU, ROMANIA'S LEADER FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.

THE MAIN TIGHTROPE ROMANIA WALKS IS ITS LONG BORDER WITH THE SOVIET UNION. IT IS A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET-LED WARSAW PACT, WHILE CALLING FOR ABOLITION OF MILITARY ALLIANCES. IT IS A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET ECONOMIC GROUP, COMECON, WHILE EXPANDING TRADE WITH CHINA, WESTERN EUROPE, THE UNITED STATES, AND THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. IT FOLLOWS A TOUGH COMMUNIST POLICY AT HOME, WHILE DEFENDING THE RIGHT OF WEST EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS TO ADAPT TO CONDITIONS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES. BUT PERHAPS MOST IRRITATING TO MOSCOW IS ROMANIA'S POSITION ON THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE. WHILE MOSCOW'S ALLIES ENGAGE IN DENUNCIATION OF CHINESE POLICY, ROMANIA DEPLORES THE DISPUTE, AND IT NOW HOSTS CHINESE CHAIRMAN HUA KUO FENG ON HIS FIRST VISIT TO EUROPE. ALWAYS WATHING HIS BALANCE, PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU SAID, EARLIER THIS MONTH, THAT ROMANIA WILL NOT BE A PARTY TO PUBLIC POLEMICS, BLAMING ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER.

WESTERN OBSERVERS SEE A PATTERN IN THE ROMANIAN MOVE. BUCHAREST'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA WERE ESPECIALLY WARM IN THE EARLY NINETEEN SEVENTIES. IN THE WAKE OF WATERGATE AND THE DEATH OF MAO TSE-TUNG, DIPLOMATS HERE NOTED A SHIFT: AN UPSURGE OF EAST EUROPEAN CONTACTS TOOK PLACE CULMINATING IN LEONID BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO BUCHAREST IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX, HIS FIRST IN TEN YEARS. THEN, ROUGHLY IN THE MIDDLE OF LAST YEAR, THE BALANCE CHANGED AGAIN. OBSERVERS POINT TO THE ROMANIAN LEADER'S TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN AS WELL AS CHINA AND CAMBODIA. HIS VISITS TO LAOS AND VIETNAM WERE MARKED BY A COLDER ATMOSPHERE. PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU'S RECENT STATEMENTS HAVE REPEATED ALL THE INDEPENDENT ELEMENTS MOSCOW DISLIKES, ALONG WITH CONDEMNATION OF EVERYONE'S FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA. SAYS ONE WESTERN DIPLOMAT, "CEAUSESCU SEES AN AGING, TIRED LEADERSHIP UNDER PRESSURE IN THE SOVIET UNION. HE MAY BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO EXPAND THE LIMITS OF SOVIET TOLERANCE." THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENT'S CONSULTATION WITH PRESIDENT BREZHNEV IN THE CRIMEA BEFORE MISTER HUA'S ARRIVAL APPARENTLY DID NOT GO WELL. THE COMMUNIQUE WAS COLD AND A PICTURE OF THE ROMANIAN AND SOVIET LEADERS TOGETHER SHOWED BOTH MEN GRIM-FACED. AN MOSCOW'S ECONOMIC INFLUENCE BEGINS TO SHRINK HERE, OBSERVERS SEE LITTLE MOSCOW CAN DO ABOUT ROMANIA'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY, SHORT OF MILITARY ACTION. GIVEN THE HISTORY OF NICOLAE CEAUSESCU'S BALANCING ACT, NO ONE EXPECTS ROMANIA TO PROVIDE MOSCOW WITH AN EXCUSE.

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